

## Assessment for Learning in the Inquiring Classroom

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## FISHBONE

How are you going to help yourself reach  
your goals?

• Actions

Goal



• Possible Hurdles

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...

- “The primary purpose of assessment is to improve students’ learning and teachers’ teaching as both student and teacher respond to the information that it provides.” (NZ Curric framework)

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- ***“Teachers need to see assessment data as saying something about them, what they are doing and what they need to do. Our eventual success depends on our ferreting out student responses and adjusting our performance, not just theirs, in light of results.”***

• Wiggins G. *Educative assessment: Designing assessments to inform and improve student performance*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1998.

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## What are our key purposes in assessment?

- To inform/fine tune further **planning**
- To help **evaluate** the effectiveness of our planning and teaching
- To provide 'stakeholders' (students, parents, teachers, community) with **feedback**/information...

***To improve student learning***

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- It is through the assessment (and reporting) that we demonstrate to our students, parents and community what we value.

- David Clarke, 1988

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## What form of assessment 'fits' best with inquiry?

- Inquiry is a student-centred approach to teaching and learning. Assessment, therefore, also needs to be 'student centred' in design.

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## Integrated learning

- Making connections throughout the day - integrative learning as a 'way of being' in the classroom
- **Designing focussed, sustained, integrated 'units of inquiry'**

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## In a good unit of work...

**Process and content** are integrated in meaningful ways. As students investigate questions and issues about the way the world works they are also learning to HOW to learn - and how they learn best.

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## What do we mean by an 'integrated inquiry?'

- A **sustained learning sequence** in which students investigate a rich question/topic/issue about the physical/social/personal world
- A learning sequence that makes authentic **connections** across the curriculum
- May be **long or short term**
- **Planning** is **ongoing and recursive (informed by students)**
- Assessment is **embedded**

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## Why is student-centred assessment important within an inquiry context?

- Inquiry itself is student-centred and based on a constructivist view of learning
- **Higher order skills** are considered central to inquiry (for eg, metacognition)
- **Process and attitudes** are valued as much as content
- **These are not easily measured by traditional assessment**
- The process of inquiry itself (when applied rigorously) has a 'built in' assessment mechanism.

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1. Clear, explicit learning **intentions (know, do and be)**
2. Explicit and co-constructed **success criteria**
3. Careful focus on **prior learning and subsequent planning**
4. Pedagogy that encourages **continual 'revelation' of thinking and understanding (especially through strategic questioning)**
5. **Formative** and **summative** assessment - tasks embedded in the unit - assessment AS learning
6. **Self and peer** assessment - as well as teacher led.

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## 1. Clear, explicit teaching intentions

- We need to 'consciously identify the deep understandings that students should demonstrate. In many cases, 'performances of understanding' are really just 'activities' about a topic and do not demonstrate the intended outcome.

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## Teaching intentions are assessment intentions

- Take time to develop understanding and skills goals
- Link these to the curriculum framework
- Make these expectations clear to students

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## 2. Explicit and co-constructed success criteria

Low achievement is often due to students not really knowing what is expected of them.

- Constructing success criteria together helps build understanding AND means more valid assessment.
- Show examples of both high and low quality 'products' and have students analyse each.

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## 3. Careful focus on **prior learning and subsequent planning**

- Early in an inquiry, we need to gather **base-line data** to enable a more valid assessment of growth.
- This data should reflect both **understanding and skill**.
- **More than one** strategy (tuning in) is advisable
- **Records** should be kept to assist with monitoring progress and for self assessment.
- This data is a significant **source of information** for teacher planning.

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Pedagogy that encourages  
***continual 'revelation' of thinking  
and understanding***

- Use strategies that encourage students to **make their thinking visible**
- Give students lots of opportunities to **talk** through the use of open ended questions, probes and collaborative tasks
- Regularly **REFLECT** - What have we learned? What do we think NOW? What is puzzling us?
- **Review tuning in** data throughout the unit.

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**Formative and summative** assessment -  
tasks embedded in the unit -  
assessment AS learning

- When well developed in the classroom, the inquiry method provides assessment data every step of the way. Every task is a potential source of information on student learning.
- Summative tasks can be a powerful way to apply understanding and demonstrate growth.

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**Self and peer** assessment - as  
well as teacher led.

- Self assessment is a vital element in the inquiry assessment suite. This is the assessment form that builds self awareness, management, ownership and transfer.

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What do we assess in  
integrated inquiry

- **Skills** (what students are learning to do)
- **Values/attitudes/behaviours** (what students are learning to be)
- **Understanding** (what students are understanding about 'the way the world works')

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How do we know when they understand?  
What constitutes quality evidence?

- Select one key understanding goal for next term's unit of inquiry...
- Brainstorm: what would your students DO, SAY or PRODUCE that you would consider *evidence* of good understanding.
- Share and compare

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## Some indicators of understanding

- Can student **explain** the concepts/ideas or teach others?
- Can the students **apply** this in some way - can they link the theory and the action? Can they use it?
- Can the students '**interpret**' and demonstrate the ideas in new ways?
- Can the students articulate how they **learned** about this and how their understanding has changed?
- Can the students identify other **perspectives** or other ways of seeing this?

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## Another view (D. Perkins)

- |                                       |                        |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| • Explanation                         | • Justification        |
| • Exemplification (can give examples) | • Compare and contrast |
| • Application                         | • Generalisation       |

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- When we attend to these facets of understanding we help students both build AND demonstrate their learning.

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- Review the understanding goals for your unit
- Review some of the skills that you intend students to improve
- Review some of the values/learning behaviours you hope students to demonstrate

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*Can students **explain** why and how? Can they link key ideas? Can they show the relationship between cause and effect? Can they explain how this works?*

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## Interpretation

- *Can the students illustrate this idea in another way? Do they grasp the central meaning? Can they interpret this in a way that is meaningful to them?*

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## Transfer

- *Can the students USE this? Can they show how it is applied to a variety of contexts? Can they modify what they have learned to suit another situation or context?*

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## Empathy/perspective

*Can the students see this from other viewpoints? Can they see how others might see this? Can they identify what this is NOT?*

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## Self-knowledge

- *Can the students identify what has helped them learn about this? Do they recognize how their thinking has changed? Can they identify what they still don't understand? Can they identify paths for further learning?*

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**“ It is only when we connect something new to something we already understand that we actually learn”** (Littky 2004)

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Reviewing your planning through an  
'understanding' lens

- Using the facets of understanding to guide your thinking consider the tasks/ contexts/questions that will both build and assess understanding.

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### Criteria for designing rich assessment tasks

- engage students in **active** learning
- **multi modal**-integrated various domains
- result in a **product or 'performance'** (often with several elements)
- focussing on a **real event/problem/question**
- designed for **real audiences**
- **individual and collaborative** elements
- **criteria and guidelines** are explicit, shared - often co-constructed
- some elements may be **negotiated**
- Draw on skills, processes and content students have previously explored or have been **modelled** to them
- include **self, group and /or peer assessment**

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